

Teen thanks paramedics, teammates after surviving cardiac arrest on soccer field

ABC Gold Coast / By Heidi Sheehan
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Ava Azzopardi, joined by her parents Tracey and Darren and brother Neo, met with first responders and paramedics. (ABC News: Heidi Sheehan)

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What happened to Ava Azzopardi has been described by paramedics as "every parent's worst nightmare".

The 14-year-old collapsed and suffered a cardiac arrest after taking to the field for a soccer game on October 15.

An off-duty doctor and an off-duty nurse were among the bystanders performing CPR until paramedics arrived.

Almost a month later, she returned to the club to reunite with her teammates and thank the first responders.

"Just thank you so much for saving my life," Ava said.

Key points:

- Ava Azzopardi, 14, collapsed after taking to the field last month
- She returned to her club on Thursday to meet with the first responder and paramedics who saved her life
- A Gold Coast paramedic says the incident highlights the importance of learning CPR

Ava did not remember the incident, but she was already raring to get her boots back on for the next season.

"I remember halfway through school that day, then nothing."

'It was really frightening'

Ava's mum Tracey Azzopardi held back tears as she described the Friday evening she saw her daughter collapse on the field.

"It was really frightening, we realised from the sideline it was Ava," Mrs Azzopardi said.

"I couldn't have imagined what it was going to be, we thought potentially a leg injury or something.

"We're so fortunate for the people that did CPR, then the paramedics."



Ava Azzopardi's family was emotional when they met with first responders who saved Ava's life. (ABC News: Heidi Sheehan)

Ava was in an induced coma and spent time in the paediatric intensive care unit.

Mrs Azzopardi said genetic testing was underway to work out what went wrong.

"They inserted a small defib for Ava, that will let her life return to normal," she said.

"Our beautiful Ava! We're so glad that she's going to get the wonderful life that she deserves."

Her friends cheered her back with a guard of honour at the Runaway Bay Soccer Club on Thursday afternoon.

"The team and the girls here are just so honoured to have her back at the club," Runaway Bay Soccer Club Director, Al Mucci said.

A fundraising campaign for the teenager raised over \$22,200.



Ava's friends and teammates cheered for her upon her return to the soccer club. (ABC News: Heidi Sheehan)

Paramedic Adam Flory was one of the first paramedics to arrive at the scene.

"Any case you go to involving children is confronting for any paramedic, no matter their experience," Mr Flory said.

"It's also a parent's worst nightmare: A fit, young, healthy girl goes to play a soccer game and goes into cardiac arrest on the field.

"It's a remarkable story, it's a remarkable recovery, it's very rewarding to see her walking around and being with her today."

The importance of CPR

An off-duty doctor and an off-duty nurse were among the bystanders performing CPR until paramedics arrived.

Mr Flory said the incident highlights the importance of learning the life-saving skill.

"CPR, defibrillation, the chain of survival coming into play which ultimately saved this young person's life," he said.

"The main message here is CPR saves lives, go and do a first aid course, go and do CPR."

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